

Message Text

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TAGS : ELAB, NI

SUBJ : LABOR UNITY- PROGRESS REPORT

REF : LAGOS 10748

SUMMARY: LABOR UNITY TALKS HAVE APPARENTLY PROGRESSED TO POINT WHERE IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO STOQ MERGER FROM TAKING PLACE. STEERING COMMITTEE HAS AQPROVED CONSTITUTION AND FOUR CENTRAL LABOR BODIES INVOLVED ARE TO HOLD NATIONAL CONFERENCE BY END OF FEBRUARY TO FORMALLY OQT FOR MERGER. JOINT DELEGATION OF TOQ LABOR LEADERS TO TOUR 12 STATES IN JANUARY TO EXPLAIN MERGER AND DRUM UP RANK AND FILE SUPPORT. END SUMMARY

1. STEERING COMMITTEE CHARGED WITH FORMATION OF NIGERIAN LABOUR CONGRESS (NLC), MEETING DECEMBER 16, SET MARCH 29 AS OPENING DATE OF NLK'S FLUNDING CONFERENKE. COMMITTEE HAD EARLIER REACHED AGREEMENT ON KONSTUTUTION, HIGHLIGHTS OF WHICH INCLUDE CLAUSE ALLOWING NLC TO AFFILIATE WITH ALL EXISTING INTERNATIONAL LABOR GROUPS (BUT NO EXPLANATION AS TO HOW THIS IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED), FORMATION OF 25 INDUSTRIAL UNCLASSIFIED

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UNIONS OUT OF 1,000 UNIONS QRESENTLY EXISTING, AND A DUES SYSTEM

UNDER WHICH 10 PERCENT OF MEMBERSHIP FEES ARE TO GO TO THE NLC. STEERING COMMITTEE DECIDED TO SEND ALL LABOR LEADERS ON A COUNTRY-WIDE TOUR IN JANUARY TO EXPLAIN DETAILS OF CONSTITUTION TO WORKERS, AND CALLED ON ALL CONCERNED LABOR GROUPS TO HOLD NATIONAL CONFERENCES BY END OF FEBRUARY TO FORMALLY OPT FOR MERGER. THIS WOULD BE IN COMPLIANCE WITH MERGER PROCEDURES LAID DOWN IN TRADE UNION DECREE (DECREE 31). COMMITTEE ALSO AGREED NO UNION OFFICIAL WILL SPEAK PUBLICLY ON UDOJI REPORT, NOW EXPECTED AT ANY TIME, UNTIL COMMITTEE HAS HAD OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW FMG'S DECISIONS.

2. ULC PRESIDENT ALHAJI YUNUSU KALTUNGO HAS NOT REITERATED STATEMENT REPORTED IN REFTEL, AND IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS HAS TAKEN SEEMINGLY MORE POSITIVE STANCE ON MERGER. HIS MAIN OBJECTION IS THAT TOO MUCH ATTENTION IS BEING GIVEN TO FORMATION OF NATIONAL CENTER AND NOT ENOUGH TO PROBLEM OF MERGING MULTITUDE OF UNION INTO STRONG, VIABLE INDUSTRIAL UNIONS. CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF NUMEROUS SMALL UNIONS BODES ILL FOR SUCCESS OF NLC AS DISGRUNTLED OR DISILLUSIONED UNION LEADERS WILL CONTINUE TO BE ABLE TO PULL THEIR UNIONS OUT OF NLC AND FORM RIVAL NATIONAL CENTER. HE RECALLED PREVIOUS MERGER ATTEMPTS IN WHICH THIS HAPPENED. BEST COURSE OF ACTION, HE ARGUED, WOULD BE TO GET STRONGER COMMITMENT ON FORMATION OF 25 INDUSTRIAL UNIONS, PERHAPS INCLUDING DEREGISTRATION OF ALL UNIONS AS 25 UNIONS ARE MERGED, BEFORE PROCEEDING WITH NLC.

MEANWHILE, ULC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HAS PUBLICLY RESTATED ULC'S INTENTION TO PROCEED WITH MERGER, THUS QUARRYING OVER DEEP SPLIT WITHIN ORGANIZATION ON THIS ISSUE.

3. RUMORS CONTINUE TO FLY CONCERNING ATTEMPTS BY INTERNATIONAL LABOR GROUPS AND/OR FMG TO STOP MERGER FROM TAKING PLACE. ASSUMPTION BEHIND RUMORS APPEARS TO BE THAT ULC LEADERS WILL STAND TO LOSE CONSIDERABLE PRESTIGE IF MERGER TAKES PLACE, AND ARE ALLOWING THEMSELVES TO BE USED BY EITHER ICFTU OR TOP MILITARY OFFICIALS IN FMG TO BREAK-UP MERGER. KONVERSE ARGUMENT IS THAT NTUF LEADERS HAVE EVERYTHING TO GAIN IN MERGER AND NOTHING TO LOSE. ICFTU INVOLVED, ACCORDING TO SOME INFORMANTS, AS IT DOES NOT WANT TO LOSE NIGERIAN AFFILIATE, AND IT IS UNABLE TO ACCEPT NLK AS AFFILIATE IF IT ALSO

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AFFILIATES TO WFTU. MILITARY GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS SUPPOSEDLY AGAINST MERGER AS THEY FEAR POTENTIAL POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC STRENGTH OF A UNITED LABOR MOVEMENT. MAIN KULPRIT IS ALLEGEDLY ULC GENERAL SECRETARY ODEYEMI, WHO IS SUPPOSED TO BE USING FMG FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO BLOCK MERGER, PLAYING ON HIS INCREASED INTERNATIONAL STATURE AS ONE OF THREE AFRICAN WORKER DELEGATES ON INTERNATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATION (ILO) GOVERNING BODY.

4. COMMENT: IT IS BECOMING OBVIOUS THAT MERGER DISCUSSIONS HAVE REACHED POINT WHERE IT WILL BE DIFFICULT FOR ANY INDIVIDUAL UNION LEADER TO GRACEFULLY BACK OUT. THEY CAN, HOWEVER, DELAY CALLING NATIONAL CONFERENCES OF CENTRAL LABOR GROUPS, A MOVE WHICH WOULD DELAY MERGER AND ALLOW MORE TIME FOR FORCES OF DISINTEGRATION TO WORK. ANY OBVIOUS ATTEMPT TO ALTER TIMETABLE SET BY STEERING COMMITTEE WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO JUSTIFY, AND WE ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE NIGERIA WILL HAVE A UNIFIED LABOR MOVEMENT IN EARLY 1975. BIGGEST THREAT TO MERGER MAY STILL COME FROM FMG WHICH IS APPARENTLY AWAKENING TO POSSIBILITY THAT UNION MOVEMENT IS SERIOUS ABOUT MERGER, AND BEGINNING TO REALIZE UNIFIED LABOR MOVEMENT COULD BE SINGLE NATIONAL ORGANIZATION POTENTIALLY CAPABLE AND WILLING TO CHALLENGE MILITARY'S DECISION TO REMAIN IN POWER PAST 1976. MILITARY MIGHT WELL DECIDE TO USE NATURAL SUSPICIONS WHICH EXIST BETWEEN VARIOUS UNION GROUPS TO BREAK UP OR SLOW DOWN MERGER.

5. QUESTION OF INTERNATIONAL AFFILIATION FOR NLK HAS BEEN EFFECTIVELY, IF TEMPORARILY, SIDE-STEPPED. APPARENTLY BOTH ICFTU AND WFTU SUPPORTERS WERE NOT WILLING TO LET THIS ISSUE DOMINATE OR INTERFERE WITH MERGER TALKS. THIS MAY BE AN INDICATION NIGERIAN UNION LEADERS ARE BEGINNING TO ACCEPT IDEA THAT FUTURE OF NIGERIAN TRADE UNIONS RESTS ON HOW THEY HANDLE DOMESTIC PROBLEMS AND NOT ON THEIR INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATIONS. ISSUE COULD STILL BE TROUBLESOME IF LEFT-WING UNIONISTS ATTEMPT PREMATURELY TO AFFILIATE NLK WITH WFTU, BEFORE ICFTU AFFILIATION QUESTION HAS BEEN RESOLVED.
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